[English]

Reogranisation of Consulates

480. DR. RAMAKRISHNA KUSMARIA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have formulated any scheme to reorganise all the consulates in a bid to accelerate the export promotion efforts of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have called for information from these consulates; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) No, Sir. However, a proposal to streamline the functioning of India's Commercial Wings abroad with a view to achieve our export trade objectives, is under consideration.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Does not arise.

Economic Growth Rate

481. SHRI K. PARASURAMAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the targeted economic growth rate fixed by the end of the Eighth Five Year Plan;

(b) whether the actual achievement of economic growth rate at the end of the Eight Plan is far below the target fixed; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) The targeted economic growth (in terms of GDP at factor cost) fixed by the end of the Eight Five Year Plan was 5.6 per cent per annum. As per the latest available information the actual rate of economic growth in the Eight Five Year Plan is likely to be 6.5 per cent per annum.

(c) Does not arise.

Trade Embargo Policy

482. SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be please to state:

(a) whether the Government have urged the United States to review its embargo policy;

(b) if so, whether this was discussed with the President of USA during his recent visit; and

(c) if so, the extent to which United States Government has agreed to review its embargo policy towards India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (c) The Government of the United States has recently named certain Indian organisations and industrial enterprises under the US Export Administration Regulations (USEAR), which entails the requirement of specific Export Licence for all commodities imported by these organisations/companies.

The matter was strongly taken up at various Ministerial and official levels to convince and urge the US Authorities to review their decision.

While some progress has been made the outcome is not fully satisfactory and further discussion in this issue will continue.

Assets of Industrial House

483. SHRI N. N. KRISHANDAS:
SHRI RUPCHAND PAL:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) Consequent upon the omission of Section 26 of the MRTP Act, 1969 by the MRTP (Amendment) Act, 1991, large industrial houses are no longer required to be registered with the Union Government;

(b) if so, whether there is any other source to know the assets to industrial houses in the county; and

(c) if so, the names of the top one hundred industrial houses and the assets they hold?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) Consequent upon deletion of part A of Chapter III of the MRTP Act, 1969 with effect from 27.09.1991, data on industrial houses are not compiled separately by the Department of Company Affairs.

Confiscation of Heroin

484. SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether highly refined heroin was recently confiscated from the possession of the senior Air India Commander at Mumbai International Airport;

(b) if so, the quantity and value of the heroin and the countries of its origin and destination;

(c) whether the contact persons to whom the heroin was to be delivered in Mumbai have been identified;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the action taken against the Air India Commander?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF THE FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : Yes, Sir. 1080 gms of Heroin valued at Rs. 2.16 lakhs at illicit market rate was seized on 9.10. 1997 from a Senior Air India Commander when he was leaving by flight No. AI-101 from Mumbai to New York. Available report indicate that the country of origin of Heroin is India and the country of destination was USA.

(c) and (d) Investigation reveal that the heroin was not to be delivered in Mumbai.

(e) The Air India Commander involved in the case has been arrested and remanded to judicial custody.

Diamond Processing Project

485. DR. M. JAGANNATH:
SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have accorded its approval to set up four units including Diamond Project in the Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone;

(b) if so, the total investment involved in this project;

(c) whether the Diamond Processing Unit is to be set up by the World-wide Diamond Manufacturing Private Limited, for processing imported rough diamonds; and

(d) the estimated export of diamonds from this project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) Four recently approved projects for establishment in Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone includes a diamond processing project with a projected investment of Rs. 11.83 crores.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Estimated exports of Rs. 753.45 crores have been projected by the unit over a period of five years from the commencement of commercial operations.

GPF Contributions

486. SHRI L. RAMANA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for ceiling in G.P.F. contributions for Central Government servants;

(b) whether the Government propose to relax the ceiling to enable the Government servants to deposit the arrears due to them on account of Fifth Pay Commission Report in the interest of economic stability in the country; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) The ceiling in GPF contributions for Central Govt. servants has been prescribed in GPF (CS) Rules. 1960 which provides that the amount of subscription may be any sum not less than 6 per cent of the emoluments and not more than the total emoluments of an employee.

(b) The proposal to allow voluntary deposit of arrears due to Government Servants on account of acceptance of the recommendations of Fifth Pay Commission into GPF is under consideration.

(c) Question does not arise.

Housing Finance Companies

487. DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Housing Finance Companies operating in the country both in public as well as in the private sector, State-wise;

(b) the rate of interest paid on deposits and the rate of interest charged by them on housing loan given to the individuals;

(c) whether the norms have recently been revised; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) National Housing Bank (NHB) has reported that as per information available with them there were 389 Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) as on 10th November, 1997 whose State-wise details are given in the Statement attached.

(b) to (d) The interest rates on public deposits charged by HFCs are governed by the Housing Finance Companies (NHB) Directions, 1989. In terms of these, the minimum rate of interest on such deposits is 10 per cent per annum while the maximum rate of interest is 15 per cent per annum with effect from 1st November, 1995. With effect from 14th March, 1997, NHB has been relaxing the ceiling on the rate of interest on deposits to be offered by HFCs with net owned fund of Rs. 50 lakh and above, on a case to case basis.

The rate of interest charged by HFCs on housing loans extended to individuals are determined by HFCs themselves. The latest rates of interest in respect of HFCs approved by the NHB for the purpose of refinance vary at present between 12 per cent to 19 per cent.